VIRTUES OF VISITING THE SICK

Visiting the sick is called 'iyaadah in Arabic (from a root word meaning return) because people come back time after time.

Some of the scholars are of the view that it is a confirmed Sunnah (Sunnah mu'akkadah). There are many ahaadeeth which speak of its virtue.

Ibn Taymiyyah said:

"Visiting the sick is a communal obligation (fard kifaayah)."
(Al-Ikhtiyaaraat, Page 85)

The Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allahu 'Alayhi wa Sallam) said:

"THERE ARE FIVE DUTIES THAT THE MUSLIM OWES TO HIS BROTHER MUSLIM,"
One of which is visiting the sick.

According to another version:

"THE RIGHTS OF ONE MUSLIM OVER ANOTHER ARE…"

Al-Bukharee said:

Chapter on the obligation of visiting the sick, and he narrated the words of The Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allahu 'Alayhi wa Sallam):

"FEED THE HUNGRY, VISIT THE SICK AND FREE THE CAPTIVES."
(Bukharee & Muslim)

This hadeeth indicates that it is obligatory, and may be understood as meaning that it is a communal obligation, like feeding the hungry and freeing the captives.

Imam Nawawi said:

"There is scholarly consensus that it is not waajib (obligatory)."

Al-Hafiz said:
"It is not obligatory for individuals."
(Al Fath, Vol 10, Page 117)

The Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allahu 'Alayhi wa Sallam) said:

"WHEN THE MUSLIM VISITS HIS (SICK) MUSLIM BROTHER, HE IS HARVESTING THE FRUITS OF PARADISE UNTIL HE RETURNS."
(Saheeh Muslim 2568)

The reward attained by the one who visits the sick is likened to the harvest reaped by one who gathers fruit.

The Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allahu 'Alayhi wa Sallam) said:

"WHOEVER VISITS A SICK PERSON OR VISITS A BROTHER IN ISLAM, A CALLER CRIES OUT TO HIM:

'MAY YOU BE HAPPY, MAY YOUR WALKING BE BLESSED, AND MAY YOU OCCUPY A DIGNIFIED POSITION IN PARADISE.'"
(Tirmidhi 2008)

Narrated by Jabir (Radia Allahu 'Anhu) that,

The Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allahu 'Alayhi wa Sallam) said:

"WHOEVER VISITS A SICK PERSON IS PLUNGING INTO MERCY UNTIL HE SITS DOWN, AND WHEN HE SITS DOWN HE IS SUBMERGED IN IT."
(Imam Ahmad in his Musnad)

Imam Nawawi said:

"Visiting the sick does not involve only those whom you know; rather it is prescribed for those whom you know and those whom you do not know."
(Sharh Saheeh Muslim)

DEFINITION OF THE SICK PERSON WHOM IT IS OBLIGATORY TO VISIT:

It is the sick person whose sickness is preventing him from seeing people. If he is sick but he is still going out and seeing people, then it is not obligatory to visit him.
(Al Sharh Al Mumti', Vol 5, Page 171)

VISITING A NON-MAHRAM WOMAN OR MAN:

There is no sin in a man visiting a non-mahram woman, or a woman visiting a non-mahram man, so long as the following conditions are met: proper covering, no risk of fitnah, and no being alone together.

Imam Al-Bukharee said in chapter on women visiting (sick) men that,

"Umm al-Darda' visited one of the Ansari men from the mosque."

Then he narrated a hadeeth from Ayesha (Radia Allahu 'Anha) that,

"SHE VISITED ABU BAKR AND BILAAL (RADIA ALLAHU 'ANHUM) WHEN THEY FELL SICK WHEN THEY FIRST CAME TO MADEENAH.

Narrated by Anas (Radia Allahu 'Anhu) that,

"ABU BAKR SAID TO 'UMAR (RADIA ALLAHU 'ANHUM), AFTER THE PROPHET (SALLA-ALLAHU 'ALAYHI WA SALLAM) DIED:

"LET US GO TO UMM AYMAN AND VISIT HER AS THE PROPHET (SALLA-ALLAHU 'ALAYHI WA SALLAM) USED TO VISIT HER,"

SO THEY WENT TO HER.
(Saheeh Muslim)

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah said:

This is to be interpreted as referring to one from whom there is no fear of fitnah, such as an old woman.

VISITING A KAAFIR:

There is no sin in visiting a mushrik kaafir who is sick, if that serves an interest.
"THE PROPHET (SALLA-ALLAHU 'ALAYHI WA SALLAM) VISITED A JEWISH BOY AND CALLED HIM TO ISLAM, AND HE BECAME MUSLIM."
(Saheeh Bukharee 1356)

And

"THE PROPHET (SALLA-ALLAHU 'ALAYHI WA SALLAM) WAS PRESENT WHEN HIS PATERNAL UNCLE ABU TAALIB WAS DYING, AND HE CALLED HIM TO ISLAM BUT HE REFUSED."
(Agreed upon)

The purpose in that case may be to call the person to Islam, or to restrain his evil, or to soften his heart, and so on.
(Fath Al Bari, Vol 10, Page 125)

SHOULD THE VISIT BE REPEATED?:

Some scholars are of the view that one should not visit every day so that it will not become burdensome for the sick person. The correct view is that it varies according to the situation. Some people may be dear to the sick person and it may be hard for him if he does not see them every day. In that case it is Sunnah to visit continuously, so long as they do not know that the sick person dislikes it.
(Haashiyat Ibn Qaasim, Vol 3, Page 12)

ONE SHOULD NOT SIT TOO LONG WITH THE SICK PERSON:

The visitor should not sit for too long with the sick person, rather the visit should be short so that it does not cause any hardship to him or his family. The sick person may pass through periods when he suffers pain because of his sickness, or he may do something that he would not like anyone to see, so sitting with him for too long will cause him embarrassment. However, it depends on the situation; the sick person may like some people to sit with him for a long time.
(Haashiyat Ibn Qaasim, Vol 3, Page 12; Al Sharh Al Mumti', Vol 5, Page 174)

TIME FOR VISITING:

There is nothing in the Sunnah that suggests that there is a specific time for visiting the sick.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah said:

The Prophet (Salla-Allahu 'Alayhi wa Sallam) did not specify any particular day or time for visiting the sick, rather he prescribed that for his ummah by night and by day, at all times.
(Zaad Al Ma'aad, Vol 1, Page 497)

Some of the Salaf used to visit the sick at the beginning of the day or in the early evening, so that the angels would send blessings upon them for the longest time, based on the hadeeth.

Narrated by 'Ali (Radia Allahu 'Anhu) that,

I heard The Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allahu 'Alayhi wa Sallam) said:

"THERE IS NO MUSLIM WHO VISITS A (SICK) MUSLIM EARLY IN THE MORNING BUT SEVENTY THOUSAND ANGELS SEND BLESSINGS UPON HIM UNTIL EVENING COMES, AND IF HE VISITS HIM IN THE EVENING, SEVENTY THOUSAND ANGELS SEND BLESSINGS UPON HIM UNTIL MORNING COMES, AND HE WILL HAVE A GARDEN IN PARADISE."
(Tirmidhi 969)

But we should pay attention to the condition of the sick person and what is easiest for him; the visitor should not choose the time that suits him best, if that is going to cause hardship to the sick person or his family.
That can be worked out with the sick person himself or with his family.
Frequent visits from people who do not take care to keep their visits short or choose the right time may make the sick person's sickness even worse.

MAKING DU'AA' FOR THE SICK PERSON:

Du'aa' should be made for the sick person in the manner narrated in the Sunnah:

"LA BA'S, TUHOOR INSHA'ALLAH

(NO WORRY, IT IS A PURIFICATION, IF ALLAH WILLS)"
(Saheeh Bukharee)

DU'AA' FOR HEALING SHOULD BE SAID THREE TIMES:

The Prophet (Salla-Allahu 'Alayhi wa Sallam) visited Sa'd Ibn Abe Waqqaas and said:

"O ALLAAH, HEAL SA'D,"
Three times.
(Bukharee 5659 & Muslim 1628)

The Prophet (Salla-Allahu 'Alayhi wa Sallam) used to place his right hand on the sick person and say:

"ADHHIB AL-BA'S RABB AN-NAAS, WA'SHFI ANTA AL-SHAAFI, LAA SHIFAA'A ILLA SHIFAA'UKA SHIFAA'AN LAA YUGHAADIR SAQAMAN

(TAKE AWAY THE PAIN, O LORD OF MANKIND, AND GRANT HEALING, FOR YOU ARE THE HEALER, AND THERE IS NO HEALING BUT YOUR HEALING THAT LEAVES NO TRACE OF SICKNESS)."
(Saheeh Muslim 2191)

The Prophet Muhammad (Salla-Allahu 'Alayhi wa Sallam) said:

"WHOEVER VISITS A SICK PERSON WHO IS NOT YET DYING, AND SAYS SEVEN TIMES IN HIS PRESENCE:

'AS'ALU ALLAAHA RABB AL-'ARSH IL-'AZEEM AN YASHFIYAKA

(I ASK ALLAAH, LORD OF THE MIGHTY THRONE, TO HEAL YOU),
ALLAH WILL HEAL HIM OF THAT SICKNESS."
(Ahmad & Abu Dawud 3106)